

The Library Assistant:

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EDITORIAL.

There is a specious philosophy being preached in these days which will not mislead any young librarian who can read the signs of the times; but there may be some younger assistants whom it will discourage. Stripped of its forced humour and unmeaning slang it amounts to this: That library assistants cannot under normal conditions aspire to salaries of more than fifteen shillings a week, and, therefore, the continual demand for culture from them is unfair. It is easy to shake a man's faith in himself or his work, and this thoughtless, profitless writing is calculated to do so. But we can urge on the opposite side that the first part of the proposition is untrue; assistants may and do in nearly every library rise to larger salaries than the sum mentioned; and the second part is also contradicted by facts. Mr. Newcombe was right when he said there was a sureness of touch about the bibliographical work done by the educated man as compared with that done by the less educated man, and we who work in libraries feel the limits of our knowledge too acutely every day. The public demands grow greater and will grow, and we must not be led to believe that allowances will be made for the assistant who has lacked educational opportunities. The writer of the statements under notice is one of our best friends in general, but he should realize that it is doing assistants an ill-service to suggest to them that they need not seek higher education because it is absurd for the public to demand it. It would be more friendly to point out that the standard of public education is constantly rising, that it is not unreasonable to expect that our future readers will be correspondingly more critical. The millennium of the removal of the rate limit, which many assistants fondly hope will bring larger buildings, shorter hours and increased salaries, will bring undoubted perils. The English public is not altruistic; it will not keep librarians who are not abreast of the best thought of the nation; and, in the day of larger salaries, if it ever comes, we may be assured of the most careful scrutiny into the qualifications of those receiving them. For an assistant to say he has borne the burden and heat of the day, and is therefore *entitled* to the higher positions is simply to beg the question. And to urge that a man's educa-

tional horizon should be drawn in relation to his salary is a mischievous fallacy. Whatever be the plane from which a library assistant starts, he has educational opportunities denied to most other men; the fault is largely his if he does not use them; and unpalatable as these truths may seem to be, they are more friendly than the current witticisms which would lead assistants to believe their lot may be easy, and that all things will be added unto them without any effort of their own.

The annual distribution of Diplomas and Certificates of the Library Association took place at the London School of Economics on January 27th; we shall have more to say of this next month. It is interesting to note that the entries numbered 280, and of these 111 were successful. We are glad that two diplomas and no less than 78 of the 111 certificates have been obtained by our own members; there is a moral in this which needs no emphasis.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING.

The February General Meeting will be held by kind invitation of the Council, at the ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE, NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C., on Wednesday, 10th February at 7 p.m. Light refreshments will be provided before the Meeting.

The chair will be taken by G. R. PARKIN, Esq., C.M.G., M.A., LL.D. The following paper will be read:—

“The Empire and the Public Library: the Relations between the Libraries and the Empire,” by PERCY EVANS LEWIN, F.R.C.L., Public Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

The report of the Council on the Library Association Registration Scheme will be submitted. In brief the report proposes, that, while the Council are unwilling to accept any scheme involving compulsory membership of an association, it suggests the following amendments to the scheme submitted at Brighton: (1) That all librarians not holding chief positions whose annual salary is £120 and upwards be admitted to fellowship. (2) That the entrance fee be not charged until the members of the Association number 1,000. The most important libraries of the kingdom have been circularised, and it is estimated that 174 assistants are in receipt of a salary of £120 and upwards. These suggestions have been laid before the Branch Committees, who are, in general, in agreement with the Council.

A large attendance is confidently expected for this meeting, which affords an unusual opportunity for inspecting a great and most important special library. We are specially honoured in our Chairman, who is a member of the Council of the R.C.I., the organiser of the Rhodes Trust,

and one of the finest speakers and greatest educational authorities living. Mr. Lewin's paper also promises to be interesting and valuable to students of library history and co-operation.

The Institute, which is opposite the Hotel Metropole, is within two minutes walk of Charing Cross, and is therefore easily accessible from all parts of London.

For other Announcements see page 278.

APPOINTMENTS.

BROWN, MR. WILLIAM, Librarian, Gainsborough, to be Re-Organising Librarian, Bolton-upon-Dearne.

*HAGGERSTON, MR. L. R., Sub-librarian, Norwich, to be Chief Librarian, *vice* Mr. J. R. Tennant, who, owing to failing health, has been appointed to a less onerous position on the Library Staff.

*HATCHER, MR. A. F., Senior Assistant, Bolton Public Libraries, to be Librarian and Indexer at the " Dispatch " and " Chronicle " Offices (Messrs. Hulton and Co.), Manchester.

*ORMEROD, MR. JAMES, Public Library, Nelson, to be Librarian, Gainsborough.

*OWEN, MR. W. E., Public Libraries, Leeds, to be Sub-librarian, Coventry.

*PEPPER, MR. F. W., Senior Assistant, Brighton, to be Senior Assistant, Bolton.

PRITCHARD, MR. C. H., Junior Assistant, Bolton Public Libraries, to be Second Assistant in the Cheltenham Public Library.

*WILLIAMS, MR. R. G., Librarian-in-Charge, Central Library, Cardiff, to be Deputy-Librarian.

*Member L.A.A.

THE VALUE OF A KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE TO LIBRARY ASSISTANTS.*

By CHARLES F. NEWCOMBE, Librarian, North Camberwell.

I suppose there is no profession in existence in which the individual members of it have to come more often into contact with a great deal in their daily work which is flatly discouraging than our own; there is nothing so benumbing to the intellect as routine, but routine can be glorified, can indeed be transfigured, if the worker has within him some passion for something, which, daily growing and constantly renewed, makes his work a pleasure to himself and of inestimable value to the public he serves. The special pleader for a particular subject—and the particular subject for which I am pleading to-night is the study of English literature, and its value to you as library assistants—is frequently placed in the somewhat false

*Read before the Library Assistants' Association at the Town Hall, Hackney, 13th January, 1909. Only a part of the paper is given; we regret having been compelled to omit the charming survey of English literature which formed the other part.

position that it is supposed he is desirous of specialising the importance of one particular form of mental culture, to the detriment of others. It is sometimes falsely assumed that he is fanatically interested in one side of his professional work. Let me at the outset say that this is not my own position, although I frankly admit that I am an enthusiast for the study of English literature, and it would be idle to deny that that study has been a source of incalculable pleasure to me personally, but I see before me to-night men who must obviously be endowed with varying tastes and capacities, and nothing can be forced, nothing can be coerced to produce natural enjoyment. But surely to you as library assistants, the importance of a knowledge of the literature of your own country cannot be overestimated. Dr. Baker, as Secretary of the Education Committee of the Library Association is quite right in urging its importance, but I am also aware that in the minds of many people and many library assistants English literature is looked upon as one of the shadowy, impracticable branches of culture to acquire a knowledge of which they very much grudge the expenditure of any part of their none too large income. It has always been my own method to encourage any assistants working with me to avail themselves of every opportunity of improving their knowledge of literary history. The field of English literature is so wide, and so varied, that it is almost impossible to have so deep and accurate a knowledge of it as the academic student whose time is free for very full study, but you can all attempt to gain that knowledge of it which will be most serviceable to you in your daily work. I am myself strongly of opinion that it is *inadvisable* to attempt too much. As I am talking to many who are young and whose future lies before them, I would say take up your study in piecemeal, in homœopathic doses as it it were, to begin with, and do not overload your mind by attempting to get a sort of hazy knowledge of the whole field of English literature from Chaucer to the present day. Make up your mind to adopt some method in your study and begin by taking the special period set apart for examination each year in Section I. of the Library Association syllabus. You must ever bear in mind that your study of English literature is approached in the spirit that it is only *one* of the branches of knowledge which in your quest for a continuous wider culture is to be of service to you as librarians. Huxley's phrase about knowing something of everything is suggestive in this connection, for you must remember that you are not training for the profession of literary critic on a daily or weekly paper. The knowledge of English literature which you require is just the kind of knowledge which will help you

in moments of cataloguing, or preparing your slips for the printer to produce a catalogue or a monthly bulletin of books which will have just that literary touch about it, evident in some interesting and accurate literary note about some epoch-making book in the history of English literature. Such knowledge will give you a sureness of touch and differentiate your catalogue from a perfunctorily compiled one, and, moreover, a much greater personal pleasure is given you in attacking the drudgery part of our profession that you will be inclined to exclaim with the author of a little book published some years ago, "Blessed be Drudgery!" Take up your study then piecemeal, and devote a certain portion of time to one special period; for every period in English literature has its specially-marked characteristic; one school of writers springs up suddenly in a certain age, and gives rise to a new school of thought, the work of the great masters of English literature is closely woven with the life of the nation. Then you will find as your study progresses and you dovetail one period on to another, and the influence of one set of writers in one age upon another set of writers in a later age that there is a wonderful continuity. For a beginner in the study of English literature, there is no more delightful guide than Mr. Stopford Brooke, and his little Primer of English Literature has become a model of what a primer should be. When it first appeared, Matthew Arnold gave it high and qualified praise, and Mr. Stopford Brooke in later editions revised his Primer according to some of Arnold's suggestions. Mr. Stopford Brooke makes the story of English literature bright, and he is always interesting. To produce a good guide to English literature is a most difficult task. I always feel that Prof. Henry Morley's "First Sketch of English Literature," though good in its way, is spoilt by the author's too evident desire to moralise and preach. When he edited the little volumes of Cassell's National Library there was the same tendency in his introductions; he always found some peg on which to hang a sermon, and consequently often reads more into his author's meaning than other people would see. Professor Saintsbury's "Short Sketch of English Literature" is excellent for cramming purposes, for the acquisition of important dates and the dry facts of literature, but the Professor is unfortunately the possessor of one of the most awkward styles imaginable, and many students are repelled by his distressingly bad style; but Prof. Saintsbury is nevertheless a very great and scholarly critic, even though we very frequently find ourselves disagreeing with his point of view. It would be almost presumptuous for me to speak of Dr. Garnett and his work in literature. He combined in a way which perhaps never has

since been combined the functions of a great organising librarian and a sound literary critic. It is always a marvel to me, the amount of good work that Dr. Garnett crowded into his life. It is, of course, only in very rare cases like that of Dr. Garnett, who lived in the Museum from boyhood, that an English librarian has such exceptional opportunities for distinguishing himself as a literary critic. Dr. Garnett made himself an authority on Shelley, on Thomas Love Peacock, on the literary circle that surrounded the Carlyles during their London life, and he was a sound authority on Italian literature.

Just as in the age of Elizabeth the drama was the form of expression in which the men of letters of the day reached the ears of the public, so to-day it is the novel which ever since the publication of "Waverley" in 1814 has flooded our libraries to such an enormous extent. Professor Raleigh's little book on the English Novel from the earliest times to the appearance of "Waverley" I commend to the notice of you all. And now I do not think that it is the desire of any man present—however much it may seem to be the desire of some of our readers—that the age in which we live should be characterised as the age of Emma Jane Worboise and Mrs. Henry Wood, of Miss Corelli and Hall Caine. I believe that there are ever widening and growing circles of cultivated readers in London who genuinely appreciate and care for the really great forces in literature to-day, and that Thomas Hardy and George Meredith should be present in your minds as representing the finer literature of our own day. Tolstoi (although a Russian) has profoundly influenced English thought and is widely read by English readers. He is an ethical and moral force. Social and ethical problems are more and more engrossing the attention of a large class of minds, and writers like Richard Jefferies, George Gissing and John Davidson are all permeated by such economic influences, while the writings of Mr. H. G. Wells have appealed very markedly to many thoughtful readers. I trust I have been able to show how wide is the field of English literature, and how every period has an interest all its own. There are many signs that a large part of the reading population of London and elsewhere finds much pleasure and solace in literary culture; vide the remarkable success of that useful little literary paper, "T.P.'s. Weekly," which does so much to popularise the best current and classical literature; we feel that the assistants within our libraries should be well equipped to meet the demands of the readers outside. Let me repeat once more that English literature is only one branch of mental culture, and that you know and I know that what a large portion of

the reading public wants to-day is information on motor-cars and moths, butterflies, bees and a thousand other subjects all interesting and important, but I claim for literature this high function, that its great prose writers and poets, its historians, dramatists and preachers, have a humanising effect on character, and a knowledge of their work will help to keep the soul alive in England.

Now I believe that there is a much greater desire among library assistants to perfect themselves in a knowledge of English literature. I believe that many have already found in it an interesting hobby, and every man should have some little outside hobby of his own, even if it is a passion for the Dewey system of classification. It will be to him a source of much pleasure and consolation. You are fortunate in having in your Secretary, Mr. Sayers, one who not only has passed with distinction the Library Association examination in English literature, but has also employed his leisure moments in writing verse of considerable merit, and there are many here, I am quite sure, who have already gained much pleasure and profit from the study of English literature. I can only hope that anything I may have said to-night may help to stimulate a further interest, and I would add, in conclusion, that the Education Committee of the Library Association propose to revive the Summer School in July of this year, which regrettably fell through last summer, owing to lack of support. The period to be dealt with will be that set for the examination for the next literature paper, viz., 1870 to the present day. I am co-operating with Dr. Baker, by giving three lectures to the Summer School on three individual writers, and I should like to add further that I quite appreciate and sympathise with the difficulty which some assistants may find in being asked to pay half-a-guinea, when half-guineas are not numerous, for London University literary lectures. The desire is, I suppose, that advantage should be taken of the best tuition, and such tuition necessarily costs money and is worth paying for. But I see no reason why much might not be done among ourselves, and for those who have already had a training in the study of literature, to render help to those members of your Association who are not at present in a position to afford an expensive fee. With regard to the time for attending lectures, most chief librarians are, I think, only too willing to facilitate arrangements in that direction, and I feel sure that those who take up the study of English literature will never regret it, and will find in that study an abiding source of pleasure and an immeasurable aid to them in their daily work.

MANUSCRIPTS.*

By ROSINE L. DUMENIL, Senior Assistant, Hackney Public Libraries.

The word manuscript is derived from the Latin *manu scripta*, meaning written by hand. The chief methods for recording the thoughts of the human race have been inscriptions and manuscripts. Inscriptions are records cut, engraved, or moulded on stone, metal, wood, or other material characteristic of the age. They are the sole authorities for some periods of history, though it must not be forgotten that fiction is quite as possible to be expressed on stone as on paper, and that it often suited monarchs or others in power to represent their actions in anything but a true light. Yet inscriptions may always be trusted to illustrate the manners and ideas of the time, and philologically they give valuable testimony to the language, its forms and spelling at any particular epoch. Even here, however, allowance must be made for the errors of uneducated workmen. Almost all the monuments of ancient Egypt bear inscribed records, written mostly in a character known as the hieroglyphic. The oldest is an ivory plaque dating from about 4700 B.C. ; and one of the most interesting is known as the Rosetta Stone, which contains an inscription in three kinds of writing—hieroglyphic, hieratic and Greek. Indeed, to this stone we are indebted for the modern decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics. This interesting relic was discovered by an intelligent officer named Boussard, who was under the command of Napoleon, in 1799. The stone can be seen in the British Museum.

The oldest documents of the world are the baked clay tablets, in the cuneiform, or wedge-shaped characters which were in use amongst the Babylonians and Assyrians. The marks imprinted on the tablets which form the records, were made by impressing the wet soft clay with a triangular pointed instrument made of wood, bone, or metal, called a stylus. The calligraphy is a testimony to the eyesight of these ancient scribes, as some of the characters are so small as to be undecipherable with the naked eye of modern men. Time has proved them to be the most durable of all records, as the British Museum can illustrate, enabling those who understand the language to read the troubles of the king who married his sister to a foreign monarch for international reasons ; also, to read the leases and business arrangements, differing but very little from our own except

*Read before the Library Assistants' Association at the Town Hall, Hackney, 13th January, 1909.

by the material on which the inscription is made. Many inscriptions have been found in Babylonia and Assyria, beginning with Layard's discoveries about the middle of the nineteenth century; and more recent discoveries, particularly those of the American Exploration Fund, have brought to light whole libraries of inscribed bricks and clay. The interpretation of the cuneiform tablet was performed by means of the great Persian inscription found about 520 B.C., and was, like the Rosetta Stone, also written in three kinds of writing, viz., Persian, Proto-Medic and cuneiform. The oldest Greek inscriptions date as early as 200 B.C., and their contents, like those of Assyrian cities, comprise inscriptions of laws, treatises, contracts, etc. Of Latin inscriptions the most useful, historically, is that composed by Augustus and known as the *Monumentum Ancyranum* and found in Galatia. It has two kinds of writing, Latin and Greek, but neither is complete. Chinese inscriptions and even the earliest use of writing in China, so far as can be ascertained, are of much later date than those of Egypt or Babylon. There are many other interesting and important inscriptions such as Runic, Indian and Semitic, to which I should like to have made more than a passing reference.

No discussion on manuscripts would be complete without reference to the interesting and important papyrus writings of Egypt, making immortal the common weed which became the first portable writing material of that country. From its purely vegetable nature it is very fragile, so much so that the greatest care has to be taken with it. The best way of preserving specimens is to place them between two sheets of glass. In spite of its fragility, however, a manuscript of this material is still in existence and is known as the Papyrus Prisse, the date of which is believed to be about 2500 B.C. Very old Greek writings also exist on papyrus. One of great interest is now at Vienna, showing the transition of writing from the slanting unicals of the early forms of the new minuscule. There is a striking difference between manuscripts and books which is not generally noticed. A manuscript is an original, and no number of copies takes away its originality or absolute position as unique. On the other hand a printed book is not unique unless only one copy has been struck off, a very rare occurrence. One is well repaid by the study of manuscripts, as many contain interesting matter and exhibit certain traits of character not usually to be found in printed books. In particular, illuminated manuscripts convey to us a good deal of knowledge of the art of the period, the conditions of men as a community, their manners, methods of dress, and their architecture. The artist, perchance, may have been a portrait painter, and we can in that

case thank him for the only known l'keness of some celebrity. We have it on authority that the now common portrait of Chaucer, said to be authentic, first appeared as a hand-painted illustration in a manuscript, and may be the only original picture of the poet in existence. Beside portrait painting, ancient manuscripts show are in its highest form ; art developing itself through the medium of the monks without thought of other than spiritual or artistic reward. We should be the possessors of many additional valuable and important manuscripts now, had it not been for the destruction of the Alexandrian Libraries ; then in later years Christian monks wrought harm as well as good, for in their zeal to record sacred compositions they frequently destroyed older, and often more valuable documents. They also re-used, from economical motives, parchment, etc., by scraping off the original writing and re-writing other matter which they considered of more importance. Documents thus treated are known as palimpsests.

In later times the Reformers destroyed a large number of classical and historical documents, in their often misdirected zeal, in attempting to remove the influence of the writings of persons whose views did not coincide with their own. To list the manuscripts of lost classics would be going beyond my limited sphere, but it is sufficient to say that many copies of older manuscripts which survived were so inter-larded with transcribers' personal views, that no great reliance can be placed on so-called copies of many texts. Petrarch tells us that in his day copyists were very ignorant and incompetent.

The classical manuscripts of the Middle Ages were corrected and re-written by a few enthusiastic scholars who obtained but very little assistance from the monks. Their chief object was to copy the text as it was originally written.

What we term manuscripts of later days are divided into two classes :— firstly, monastic and other writings on vellum ; secondly, original manuscripts of celebrated literary works written on paper. The latter class brings us into contact with many well-known literary men of comparatively recent times. Some places are well known for the type of manuscripts they collect. Nearly all public libraries in large towns endeavour to secure the manuscripts of the writings of local people, but are very seriously handicapped in this work by wealthy collectors with bottomless purses, paying almost any sum for original papers written by any eminent men. Thus they are practically banned to the public, for but few collectors allow strangers to study their literary treasures.

So far as literary merit is concerned monastic manuscripts rank highest, and a curious characteristic of this class of manuscript is, that the earlier the

date, the clearer and neater the writing. In these documents the age is an important item, and much practice in comparing one document with another is necessary to enable one to fix accurately the date of production. Stray manuscripts from the 12th to the 15th century are nearly always Bibles, Psalters, or Books of Hours; rarely do we find a Missal. I have referred to stray manuscripts, the title may seem odd, but about this time people were becoming acquainted with the use of paper, therefore writings on vellum were becoming scarce and more highly appreciated; this accounts for their sparse distribution.

No manuscript written before the invention of printing has a title page, and it is difficult work for even a competent judge to distinguish a complete from an incomplete document. In collating manuscripts it should be seen that the catchwords at the foot of one page are repeated at the top of the following one, or, if there are any signatures, they should follow as in a printed book. Coming to public and private records, England is quite exceptional in the extent and continuity of her historical documents. No nation can show a book which can compare with Domesday Book, the grandest, and among the earliest of English records. It was founded by William the Conqueror in 1086, and contains among other information particulars relating to cultivation, population, value of land, etc. It is housed at the Public Record Office, with many other manuscripts of public importance.

BERTRAM L. DYER: AN APPRECIATION.

With the passing of Bertram L. Dyer the L.A.A. has lost one of its most conspicuous members; a man whose influence for good in the Association it is too soon to estimate. The details of his early career, together with a portrait, appeared in *The Library Assistant* for August 1900 and need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that he was born in 1868, educated at the Whitechapel Foundation School and at King's College, London, and first entered library work as an assistant at Toynbee Hall. In 1888 he joined the staff of the Kensington Public Libraries and in 1900 accepted the position of Chief Librarian of the Kimberley Public Library. He soon became a power in South Africa, his influence extending to the whole of the sub-continent. He was in frequent communication with the educational authorities of the various Colonies, and rapidly won them over for the public library movement, whilst requests for advice were constantly reaching him from all quarters.

As Hon. Secretary he successfully organised the first Library Conference held in South Africa, which took place at Cape Town in April 1903, under the auspices of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science. At this Conference he submitted a paper on the "Public Library Systems of Great Britain, America and South Africa," afterwards amplified and issued as a *brochure* of which over 600 copies were sold in South Africa alone. On his recommendation the Science Association agreed to make the library section a permanent feature of their annual conferences. Speaking of his work at Kimberley the *Kimberley Evening Star* says, "We doubt whether in this short period (8 years) any other citizen had so ingratiated himself into the hearts of his *confreres*. . . . Innumerable undertakings impossible to mention here will suffer an irreparable loss, and find it more difficult to run an easy and successful course now they have subtracted from their assets a worker of his mental calibre." His literary work was also very extensive and the same paper says, "It will never be known how widespread were his influences in this sphere of work, but there were many newspapers ever ready and solicitous to add his contributions to their columns, knowing how acceptable any matter from his pen was to the reading and thinking public." For some time he conducted a "library page" in the Cape Town *New Era*, a weekly review similar to our *Spectator*, and he was largely instrumental in founding the *Kimberley Evening Star* in 1903, to which both he and our friend Mr. Lewin were frequent contributors. Of his work for library assistants much might be written. He was an original member of the L.A.A., the founder and first Editor of *The Library Assistant* and Hon. Secretary of the Association from 1898 to 1900. His organising ability, enthusiasm, and sound common sense did much to place the L.A.A. on a firm basis at a time when a weaker man might have caused irretrievable mischief. Through the pages of the early volumes of *The Library Assistant* his work may be traced and when the history of the L.A.A. comes to be written no figure will loom larger in the first ten years of its existence than he whose untimely death we now lament. I have before me as I write, a circular issued in March 1900, inviting subscriptions to a testimonial, presented at the annual meeting in the following June, in which this paragraph appears, "It is difficult to measure the value of the services rendered by Mr. Dyer. Every member has directly felt his influence. . . . The scope of the Association's work has been greatly extended under the enthusiastic efforts which were the occupation of his leisure. The publication of an official organ would have been

long postponed but for his willing services."

Although 7,000 miles separated him from the centre of activity, Bertram Dyer retained until the last the liveliest interest in the doings of the L.A.A. and readers of this journal will remember his cheery, optimistic, and vigorous letter which was published in our issue of August-September last. He never tired of affirming the superiority of *The Library Assistant* over other library journals, and frequently stated that he gained more information as to the progress of library affairs from its pages than from anywhere else. In 1900 his essay on

"How best to increase the usefulness of the L.A.A." was premiated as the Cotgreave Prize Essay and is printed in *The Library Assistant* for December of that year. He it was who started the idea of the Provincial Branches as a way of extending the Association's work, and the preliminary memorandum he drew up still remains the basis upon which our Branches are established. With Mrs. Dyer much sympathy will be felt in her sad bereavement, intensified as it is by the painful suddenness with which the blow fell. Her kindly personality is well known to a number of our members who have found her the most genial of hostesses, and many are the social gatherings of L.L.A. workers over which she has shed her influence.

What more can we say of Bertram Dyer than that his monument already exists in the records of the L.A.A. which he loved so well, and that it will be impossible to dip into the history of the Association without realising what an important part he played in its early history?

W. GEO. CHAMBERS.

We also regret to report the sudden death, from heart disease, of Francis Samuel Lewis, B.A., Oxon, Librarian of the South African Library, Cape Town. The tragic event occurred at St. James, Cape Colony on 2nd December, one day previous to the sudden death of the Librarian of Kimberley.

PROCEEDINGS.

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING.

The January General Meeting was held at the Hackney Central Library, by kind invitation of Mr. Councillor Arthur S. Butler, Chairman of the Libraries Committee, on Wednesday, 13th January. The members arrived at the Library at 6.30 p.m. and were conducted over the building in parties by Messrs. Aldred and Parker. A typewritten description of the Library and its work, giving some interesting particulars of the library movement in Hackney, had been prepared by Mr. Aldred, the Chief Librarian, and a copy was given to each member. After

the inspection of the building, an adjournment was made to the Hackney Town Hall, where, in the largest Committee Room, tea was provided by the hospitality of Mr. Butler. During tea, the Mayor and Mayoress (Mr. Ald. and Mrs. George Billings) of Hackney, entered and welcomed the Association to the Borough.

The Business Meeting which followed was presided over by Mr. Councillor Butler, and the attendance was upwards of sixty.

The CHAIRMAN, having cordially welcomed the Association, called upon Miss R. L. Duménil to read her paper.

Miss R. L. DUMENIL then read her paper on "Manuscripts," which appears on another page, and a brief discussion followed.

MR. J. D. STEWART (Islington) thought that the chief interest of Miss Duménil's paper lay in emphasising the value of manuscripts from a historical point of view, and more particularly from a local historical point of view, as was shown by the copy of the local document, and its translation which she had so kindly and with much labour and care, provided for the meeting that evening. The paper did not admit of discussion, as the array of interesting facts presented conclusively proved the value of the manuscripts from the librarian's standpoint.

MR. GEORGE MORLEY (Patent Office Library) speaking also of the uniqueness of the manuscript, a point noted by Miss Duménil, cited her illustration of the Rosetta stone as being an example of what scholarly foresight had done, in preserving for posterity the key to an ancient literature; which before its discovery had been practically untranslatable. The librarian should make wise provision for local manuscripts, which might be of interest to a future, as well as the present, generation.

THE HONORARY SECRETARY (Mr. Berwick Sayers) remarked upon the little care that had been taken by our predecessors of documents of great value. As Miss Duménil had pointed out, no small part of classical literature had perished through carelessness or ignorance; scarcely a text that remained could be regarded as pure, and we would give much to possess the original texts of Homer, Cicero, Cæsar, or, particularly, of the books of the Bible. Manuscripts were not only our sources of history in many cases, but also furnished the finest examples of illumination; the Book of Kells and the Lindisfarne Gospels were among the greatest artistic treasures of the world. The number of local manuscripts possessed by public libraries was infinitely small; yet there were deeds, indentures, leases and similar documents lying about in nearly every lumber shop, and these had no small value for the student. Our fathers had been careless of records we should now prize greatly, and we should

be careful not to do a like injustice to our descendants.

Mr. CHARLES F. NEWCOMBE then read his paper on "The Value of a Knowledge of English Literature to Library Assistants."

Mr. J. D. STEWART (Islington) doubted whether any subject had been more ineffectively taught than literature. The paper appealed to him because it showed the perfectly sane side of the question of what is literature. That the term "literature" should be a very broad one was proved when we looked at the multifarious divisions into which it could be divided. There is a literature of science, another of art, another of history, and so on. Such books as Darwin's "Origin of Species" in science, and H. G. Wells' essays in sociology were literature. He thought the assistant should familiarize himself with as many divisions as possible. The whole of literature was not confined to the work of the classical essayists.

Mr. J. D. YOUNG (Greenwich) thought that while a knowledge of bygone literature was of value, library assistants would naturally care more for modern literature. The average of modern literature was not bad, and the ideas and aims of the writers of to-day were more in sympathy with our own than those of two or three centuries since.

The REV. J. HILLMAN (of the Hackney Libraries Committee), in proposing a vote of thanks to the readers of the papers, said he felt assured that the papers would be an invaluable incentive and guide in directing studies. Under the influence of such studies life would take on a newer aspect, and the ordinary hum-drum existence of many would be transformed into another and more inspiring realm of being. The work of the librarian, he rejoiced to say, opened up that realm to thousands of toilers.

THE PRESIDENT (Mr. Benson Thorne), in seconding the vote of thanks, said the meeting owed a great deal to Mr. Newcombe for the high ideals he had set before them. He felt there was a lack of interest shown by library assistants generally in the literature of their own country. He would like to see a greater enthusiasm shown toward the training offered by the Library Association. He would advocate method in study; and, he thought it advisable to take up one portion in particular at a time. And, in this matter, the personal inclinations of the student would be the best guide. The higher influence of the study of English literature could not be overlooked.

Miss DUMENIL thanked the meeting for its appreciation of her effort. She hoped an interest in local history would always be maintained by those who had control of libraries.

Mr. NEWCOMBE, in responding, said he hoped that he had been able to create a fuller enthusiasm for a study which had proved such a source of pleasure to himself.

His desire was to point out to others the benefits he himself had derived from the study. Mr. W. GEO. CHAMBERS

(Honorary Treasurer), in moving a vote of thanks to the Chairman and the Hackney Library Authority, said that the noble way the L.A.A. had been received at Hackney was, he felt, highly appreciated by all. He was proud of the fact that throughout the length and breadth of the land a cordial reception was given to the Library Assistants' Association. He thought the older members of the Association had developed the ideal of instilling an enthusiasm into the younger members of the profession. There were to-day nearly one thousands buildings devoted to public libraries, with some twe've millions of books and issues averaging one hundred and seventy-five millions; figures which showed to what extent it was possible for the work of the Association to grow in its influence. THE CHAIRMAN

HONORARY SECRETARY, seconding, said Hackney had reason to be proud of the results achieved by the Library. He considered the successful administration of the library with an extremely small staff little short of a marvel. THE CHAIRMAN

responded, and hoped that the Association would again soon visit the district. He thought the ideals of the Association were excellent and that every library assistant should be a member. He would influence any with whom he came into contact to become members. Mr. THOMAS ALDRED (Chief

Librarian, Hackney), in expressing his pleasure at receiving a visit from the L.A.A., spoke of the early difficulties which he, as a provincial assistant, had encountered; he had to travel as much as sixty miles to see what another library was doing. The growth of the library movement had changed all that, especially in London, where assistants had unusual opportunities of studying other systems. He hoped members who desired further information about the administration of the Hackney Library would call upon him.

The proceedings then terminated.

IRISH BRANCH: ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS OF IRELAND.

The January Monthly Meeting was held in the Central Reference Library, Belfast. Mr. R. J. Gourley presided.

Mr. WILLIAM MOORE read a paper on the "Dewey Classification," which was afterwards criticised and discussed by Messrs. Simpson, Coulson and Gourley. Mr. WILLIAM ROWAN then read a paper on "Practical Bookbinding," giving his audience the benefit of many years' experience of practical work in connection with this department of library administration. At the close Mr. Rowan gave an interesting

demonstration, illustrating the technical points of his paper by books in various stages of use, and showing what was most necessary for the binding of books for public library purposes.

Arrangements were made for the next meeting, at which papers will be given by Messrs. Simpson and Scilley.

NORTH EASTERN BRANCH.

A quarterly meeting of the North Eastern Branch of the Library Assistants' Association was held, by kind permission of Mr. J. A. Charlton Deas, Librarian and Director, at the Sunderland Public Libraries on Wednesday, December 16th 1908. 37 members attended. After visiting the Winter Gardens and Art Gallery, the members proceeded by car to the Hendon Branch Library. This new Library, planned on the open-access system and embodying many details of interest, was carefully inspected under the guidance of members of the Libraries' Staff. The arrangement of the library was greatly admired.

Adjournment was then made for tea, thoughtfully provided by the Sunderland Staff.

The re-assembly took place

6.30 p.m., and before the business meeting facilities were offered for viewing the Central Library and Art Gallery. The general meeting was held in the Art Gallery. Mr. J. A. CHARLTON DEAS, Librarian, welcomed the guests in a speech expressing sympathy with the objects of the meeting. He was heartily thanked for his address which was pleasantly relieved by some humorous references.

Miss M. A. FORMAN, Victoria Branch Library, Newcastle, read the Member's paper, the title being "Stray Thoughts of a Librarian." She said her subject was the inner life of the profession of librarianship. The librarian led a dual life—he was both "a servant of the public and wisdom's devotee." For the cultivation of the practical side the standard of efficiency had been set by the Library Association, although she did not forget that that body also provided very strong tests of a literary and bibliographical nature. However, she wished to confine her remarks to the inner side of life's shield—that kept nearest the breast. Taking counsel of the giants of literature and the fine arts moulded the mind and acted on the nature, and so added to the equipment of the librarian in quite a different way from that of which we heard so much. A point which gave charm to our vocation was that we could exercise it at all times, whether at home or in its immediate sphere—the library. In an armchair on Sunday afternoon, for instance, whither does one's reading lead? Probably to the Land of Nod eventually, but the reader, without conscious effort, may have culled knowledge, learning, and food for thought. Then, in the library there were tasks, almost

mechanical, during the carrying out of which one might quite fairly think of other things. Let us go off for a jaunt at these times, only let us be sure to take return tickets, available at any moment, so that if our Chief's signal moved and our mental presence were required as well as our body, we might hie back with all haste. The reader of the paper then proceeded to indicate writers the contemplation of whose works might be profitable at spare moments. She concluded by reading the following original sonnet which, she said, conveyed, in its necessarily succinct form, what had been put before the meeting :—

“ Dear Mother Earth doth at this time appear
 Clad in her cloak of russet brown and grey ;
 The heavens do lower, and with an aching fear
 Some eager heart longs but for one bright ray ;
 The fields are bare, the trees their leaves have cast,
 The very birds to distant shores are gone,
 Seeking, with instinct rare and passage fast,
 Summer prolong'd—cold is to them unknown.
 Now is the time when to our mind we turn
 And draw upon its store, soft balm to gain—
 All that we had in brightest mood we learn,
 To bless and prize, and with it ease dull pain.
 This simple method may one recommend,
 And thus bring 'stray thoughts' to a timely end ? ”

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. D. W. Herdman) said he had listened to the paper with intense interest and pleasure. The writer had touched upon a point of solace to ourselves in the work we were engaged in. He urged assistants to cultivate a spirit of the beautiful in literature. The paper had been stimulating in that direction. Mr. J. WALTON (Newcastle) welcomed a literary paper and would like to hear one read more often. Assistants' thoughts, however, should not wander too much during business hours. The VICE-CHAIRMAN (Mr. W. H. Gibson) believed it was good to look sometimes at the less practical side of our work, and spoke of the charm of the paper. Mr. I. BRIGGS (Newcastle) was sympathetic with papers of that character, and suggested that one paper of a practical nature and one of æsthetic interest should be read at each meeting. Mr. A. H. YATES (Sunderland) questioned whether assistants should be allowed to read when on duty, but they should most certainly have opportunities to examine the books added to the library. Mr. W. WILSON (Gateshead) considered that there should be no implication that because a man was practical he could not be literary. Even practical subjects involved literary knowledge. The HON. SECRETARY (Mr. T. E. Turnbull) thought the condem-

nation of reading by assistants in library hours was carried too far. He advocated it to a certain extent. The Associate's paper was read by Mr. R. N. A. MILLAR, Central Library, Newcastle, and was entitled "The Museum as an Adjunct to the Public Library." The writer thought that the museum and the library should be in adjacent buildings, or, at any rate, within easy reach of each other, because of the mutual help then possible. He disbelieved in the museum being in private hands; the proper owners were the public authorities, for co-ordination was then much easier. A student in the public reference library should be able to take the work he was reading into the museum if he so desired, there to inspect actual models or examples for comparative purposes. The museum should contain more specimens of industrial arts than it at present does. Most of the subjects dealt with in a library's books might be illustrated in the museum, and facilities should be offered with that end in view. A good deal more could be done to make the institutions the help-mates of each other than is now done.

The CHAIRMAN considered the paper a suggestive one and open to criticism. Mr. PEARSON questioned the utility of museums to, say, engineering students. Mr. YATES spoke of the labelling in museums being important. He favoured cross-references to books being affixed to exhibits. Mr. DUTTON. B. Sc. (Deputy Curator of the Sunderland Museum), in the course of an interesting speech on museum policy generally, said museums of the past had too often been a kind of old curiosity shop, but reform was gradually coming about. He thought that lessons could be much better taught by objects and that the museum had therefore the advantage from an educational point of view. He defended the use of Latin names in describing objects, with, however, a popular description added.

A thoroughly enjoyable meeting then ended with votes of thanks. The next meeting is to be held at Gateshead in March.

SOUTH WALES BRANCH.

NOVEMBER MEETING.

At the November Meeting "Registration" was discussed. Mr. E. J. REES, with an interesting paper, introduced the subject. He thought that the Library Association should keep the register. There were, however, some things in the L.A. scheme of which he did not approve. In replying, Mr. R. G. WILLIAMS said that the time was not yet ripe for registration and he criticised many of the features of the Library Association scheme. The reading of the papers was followed by a general discussion.

DECEMBER MEETING.

On Wednesday, December 16th, at 3 p.m., a meeting of the South Wales Branch was held at the Central Library, Cardiff. Mr. HARRY FARR was in the chair. In opening the meeting the Chairman explained what had been done by the Committee with regard to the presentation to Mr. Ballinger. He then called upon Miss E. O. DAVIES to read a paper on "Children's Halls," which proved very interesting, and was based on practical work done at the Cathays Children's Hall. Miss K. E. JONES, Superintendent of the Canton Children's Hall, followed with a paper on the same subject. We hope to publish both of these papers in the near future. After a discussion the meeting closed with the passing of a vote of thanks to the readers of the papers.

SOCIAL GATHERING.

A Social Gathering on the lines of the one which was so successful last year is being arranged, to be held, it is hoped, at the ISLINGTON LIBRARY HALL, during March. The proceedings will include dancing, music, games and refreshments. Tickets will be 1s. 6d. single, or double tickets 2s. 6d. Those intending to be present should advise Mr. Henry T. Coutts, North Library, Manor Gardens, Holloway, N.

NORTH EASTERN BRANCH.

Election of Officers, 1909-10.

Nominations, endorsed by two members or associates of the Branch, should reach the Hon. Secretary, Public Library, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, not later than SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1909. Each office is elective, and the following are the present office holders:—Chairman, Mr. D. W. Herdman; Vice-Chairman, Mr. W. H. Gibson; Treasurer, Mr. R. H. U. Howe; Secretary, Mr. T. E. Turnbull. Committee:—(4 Members): Miss M. A. Forman, Messrs. H. Burgess, J. Walton, W. Wilson; (2 Associates): Miss M. Pringle, Mr. E. Pearson (the latter is not eligible for re-election as an Associate member of the Committee).

SOUTH WALES BRANCH: FEBRUARY MEETING.

The Next Meeting will be held at the CARDIFF CENTRAL LIBRARY on Wednesday, 17th February, when the following papers will be read and discussed:—

Member's paper: "The Assistant and the Public," by W. O. PADFIELD.

Associate's paper: "The Question of the Newsroom," by HERBERT BOUGHTON.

All assistants are invited.

NEW MEMBERS

MEMBERS.—Leonard Boswell, Enfield; T. W. Wright, Bolton.

NORTH EASTERN BRANCH.

ASSOCIATES.—Miss E. S. Beer, Sunderland; Miss M. Coatsworth, Sunderland; Walton Murphy, Newcastle.